believe, and we make our best efforts to honestly work with them based on what we really believe, there will be some things left on the table next November that we can probably go to the electorate with. And we don't have to be ashamed of that.

But we owe it to our people to make sure that if any of these things that could become law and could change their lives and could make more stories like these three we've heard—that if it doesn't happen this year, we owe it to the American people to make sure that it is not our fault, that we showed up and we did the work here. We owe it to them.

What is the purpose of a political party? I spent a lot of time last year reading about the 19th century and about places in the 1800's, periods of time that most Americans don't know much about anymore. I've spent a lot of time studying the history of our party. I believe the purpose of our Government and, therefore, the purpose of any political party, at every important period in our history, if you look back through it, has been threefold: to widen the circle of opportunity, to deepen the meaning of freedom, and to unify the Nation.

Now, that's what Thomas Jefferson did with the Declaration of Independence, the Bill of Rights, the Constitution, and then became President, and he bought Louisiana— thank you very much; it put Arkansas in the Union—[*laughter*]—and sent Lewis and Clark out West. Right? Widened opportunity, deepened freedom, unified the country.

Now, any honest Democrat will say that the Republicans did more of that than we did, from Abraham Lincoln through Theodore Roosevelt. And frankly, I'm sure we had a lot of nice people in our party during a lot of that period, but they were asleep at the switch. But from Woodrow Wilson to Franklin Roosevelt to Harry Truman to John Kennedy to Lyndon Johnson to Jimmy Carter to the present day, through all of our leadership in Congress in the 20th century forward, our party—we haven't always been right; we haven't always been up to date; but we have always been for widening the circle of opportunity, deepening the meaning of liberty and freedom, and uniting and strengthening the United States of America. That is what we ought to be about here. That

is what we ought to be about. And if we do it, the American people will respond.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:28 a.m. in the Dirksen Senate Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Barbara Turner, founder, Boscart Construction Co., Inc., and Washington, DC, chair, Women's Leadership Forum; Judith Lee, comptroller, Older Women's League; and Kate Casey, student, Trinity College, Washington, DC.

Statement on the U.S. District Court Decision on the Line Item Veto
February 12, 1998

The line item veto provides an important tool for the President to strike unnecessary spending and tax items from legislation. Congress took the correct step giving the President this authority, and I was pleased to sign the line item veto into law. It has worked well, saving the American taxpayers more than $1 billion already. Although I am disappointed with today's ruling, it is my belief that, ultimately, the line item veto will be ruled constitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court.

Message on the Observance of Presidents' Day, 1998
February 12, 1998

Warm greetings to all Americans as we observe Presidents' Day, 1998.

On this day we remember with pride the history of the American Presidency and the achievements of the many extraordinary leaders who have guided our nation's course over the past two centuries. Each President in his own time has faced unique challenges in striving to fulfill the purpose of our Constitution "to form a more perfect Union."

For George Washington, that challenge meant sustaining and strengthening the fragile Union he had helped to establish. During the eight years of his Presidency, he carried out the awesome responsibilities of his office with such care and wisdom that he confirmed the trust of his fellow Americans and proved to a watching world that our new republic would survive and flourish.